United Nations A/C.4/64/SR.8

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 November 2009

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)
later: Mr. Valladares (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Honduras)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (A/64/21 and A/64/262)

1. **Ms. Chambers** (Jamaica), speaking in her capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of that Committee (A/64/21), which provided information on the Committee's activities and recommendations in the form of a draft resolution.

2. During the general debate at the 2009 session, members had emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. Several speakers had also emphasized the vital role of the Committee on Information and called for its continued cooperation with the Department of Public Information. Emphasizing the importance of achieving parity among the official languages, speakers had urged the Department to work to close the gap between the number of web pages offered in English and those in the other languages. Several speakers had said that all possible measures should be taken to strengthen the network of United Nations information centres. Traditional means of communication continued to be important in effectively promoting the message of the Organization, so several speakers had urged the Department to continue to strengthen its relationships with radio stations in Member States. A number of speakers had also asked the Department to play a stronger role in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

3. The Committee on Information had adopted a draft resolution on questions relating to information, and a draft decision agreeing to appoint Sierra Leone as a member, bringing the total membership to 113. An agreement had been reached between the Group of 77 and China and the European Union, along with other members, to form a task force to streamline the resolution and produce a revised text at least two weeks before the opening of the thirty-second session of the Committee on Information.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.40 a.m.

4. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the Report of the Secretary-General on Questions relating to Information (A/64/262), said that during the recent general debate of the General Assembly, the Department of Public Information had organized a briefing for members of the Committee on Information and press officers from the Permanent Missions. The briefing had focused on the various high-level events being held, and had also served as an opportunity for an informal exchange between the Secretariat and Member States. At the request of Member States, the Department would continue to organize similar briefings in the future. The next such briefing would be held in early December on the subject of the changing media landscape. The decline of the print news industry in many countries, and the rise of social media, including in developing countries, had direct bearing on the work of the Department to inform and engage different audiences.

5. The Department's efforts also involved the strategic planning and coordination of communications, in partnership with United Nations bodies and external partners, as well as providing up-to-date information and news services, including by providing press credentials to an additional 1,500 journalists for the general debate, in order to ensure national and global media coverage.

6. Efforts to engage new audiences increasingly involved the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT) to complement existing capacities in television, radio and print. The Department was conscious of the need to provide accurate, timely, comprehensive and coherent information in ways that matched the expectations of the modern communications industry and the general public. However, it was equally aware of the need to ensure that information continued to reach those without easy access to new media. During the general debate, the Department of Public Information had posted speakers' statements on the General Assembly website as soon as they had been delivered, accompanied by videos, press releases and photographs. Between 22 and 24 September, the United Nations Webcast had made available some 70 hours of coverage, which had registered some 750,000 live and on-demand views from 200 countries and territories. The multilingual United Nations News Centre had also produced a record number of stories supported by related radio programming and other multimedia material.

7. In 2009, the Department had used the micro-blogging tool Twitter for the first time, "tweeting" quotes from statements live from the General Assembly

Hall, as well as links to photographs, webcasts and other materials. Another first had been the launch of the *Citizen Ambassadors to the United Nations* campaign via the United Nations YouTube video channel, encouraging world citizens, young people in particular, to engage directly with decision-makers by uploading video messages responding to the question: "if you had the opportunity to speak to world leaders, what would you say?". Videos featuring the Secretary-General, Messenger of Peace George Clooney, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai had been viewed more than 135,000 times in total. Yet another first was the projection in the General Assembly Hall of messages from around the world in response to the Secretary-General's WMD: We Must Disarm campaign. Launched 100 days before the International Day of Peace, the campaign used the Internet and popular social networking sites to call for a world free of nuclear weapons.

8. The Department's greater use of new information and communications technologies was also benefiting the Permanent Missions. The deleGATE website (www.un.int) now provided content in English and French from the Secretariat's intranet site as well as links to other information created especially for delegates, and was being accessed around 18,000 times per month on average. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also planned to provide instant access on the website to an archive of official documentation related to each Member State's participation in the United Nations. In coordination with the Department of Management and the Office of Information and Communication Technology, the Department of Public Information was also looking into secure ways of sharing information with Member States about the status of their financial contributions.

9. As its network of broadcasting partners expanded, opinion pieces by senior United Nations officials continued to be placed in newspapers around the world with the assistance of the United Nations information centres. The Secretary-General's op-ed on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, for example, had been published in more than 55 newspapers and periodicals in 30 countries, and his piece on climate change had been published in 14 languages in more than 30 newspapers.

10. 2009 had marked the second time the Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations had been organized away from United Nations Headquarters, providing an effective way to reach out to those who would not otherwise have been able to attend. He thanked the Government of Mexico for their partnership in organizing the 2009 conference. Partnership, both within the United Nations system and with outside partners, remained the Department's preferred method for its communications campaigns on priority areas. For example, the Department had coordinated a United Nations Communications Group Task Force on Climate Change to facilitate discussion and promote a common message, as well as producing and updating relevant websites. The United Nations had also entered into partnerships with others, including the International Advertising Association, which had recently begun its "Hopenhagen" campaign in support of a successful outcome at the Copenhagen climate change summit.

11. In a new initiative, the Department had held the first Annual Global Model United Nations Conference in Geneva in August 2009, with the participation of more than 300 students. For the first time, each delegation had been composed of students from different countries and they had been given unprecedented access to senior United Nations officials in preparation for their roles. The event had been a great success and the Department intended to continue to project annually, with support from Member States. He acknowledged the support of Switzerland in the organization of the conference; the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations Federal Credit Union had also been instrumental in facilitating the participation of students from developing countries.

12. Turning to issues raised at the session of the Committee on Information, he said that the revamped *UN Chronicle* now comprised a mixture of short pieces and in-depth articles on relevant topics. Contributions to the magazine were actively sought from all regions, with an emphasis on ensuring gender balance and providing a platform for authors from the developing world. However, budgetary limitations continued to adversely affect the ability of the United Nations information centres to provide products and services to local communities. The global economic crisis had forced some host Governments to limit or even suspend their contributions to the Centres. Increases in rent, maintenance costs and the need to address growing security requirements, coupled with decreases in voluntary contributions, had necessitated a reduction in allocations for equipment and communications

activities. Security and safety concerns in particular required additional funding and urgent support from host Governments. Support for information centres from Governments, whether in the form of rent-free premises or contributions to outreach activities, was much appreciated. Support from Member States was also crucial to the digitization and preservation of the United Nations unique photographic, audio, and video archive.

13. The Department of Public Information was fully committed to making use of available resources to enhance and diversify its range of programmes, products and services, as guided by the priorities set by Member States, via the Committee on Information in particular.

14. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee would hold an interactive dialogue on the item, and invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

15. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen) praised the efforts of the Department of Public Information to improve the United Nations website but noted that some of the Arabic pages contained linguistic errors and that their content was not updated regularly.

16. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan), Rapporteur, speaking in his capacity as the representative of the Sudan, thanked the Working Group of the Department of Public Information for its efforts to enhance the image of the United Nations. He also praised the Department's work during the general debate, with particular reference to its recent briefing for the Committee on Information, the publication of *United Nations in Focus* to coincide with the opening of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, and to facilitating access for journalists and publishing copies of statements on the website.

17. However, there was still a need to strengthen the focus of the Department on people in the developing world, who did not have access to affordable modern technology and mass media. The Department should create initiatives to strengthen dialogue on the best ways to present the message of the United Nations in those regions. He welcomed the improvements that had been made to United Nations Television and Video (UNTV).

18. Holding conferences away from United Nations Headquarters in a variety of locations around the world was a good way of ensuring that information about the Organization's work reached the widest possible audience, and should therefore continue.

19. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), responding to the comments from the representative of Yemen, said that the Department was already aware of the website's Arabic translation issues, and would continue to work to reduce the number of errors and update the information on the site.

20. Turning to the points raised by the representative of the Sudan, he said that the *United Nations in Focus* publication was designed to highlight important points in an easy-to-read format. The Department intended to continue publishing at least two issues per month, focusing on various events and meetings. In 2010, the Department would endeavour to organize a briefing in early September prior to the high-level events of the General Assembly session.

21. While the Department was expanding its activities into the areas of new media and social networking, he remained aware of the importance of addressing the needs of developing countries, where those tools were not always accessible or affordable. The Department intended to continue producing television and radio programmes, printed press releases and brochures which could be distributed widely. He urged delegations to find media partners in their countries that could make use of the Department's products and programmes, and noted that many of the radio programmes were already available on the website. The Department had also signed a number of memorandums of understanding with radio stations, forming the basis of more long-term collaborative relationships.

22. **Mr. Askarov** (Uzbekistan) said that the United Nations News Centre was one of the most frequently used sources of information about United Nations activities for the people of Central Asia and praised those involved in producing the Russian language version in particular. The information on the site was objective and unbiased, which was why it was trusted by many news outlets across the region. He enquired about the financial and human resources of the United Nations News Centre's language service and its prospects for the future, particularly with regard to the Russian language.

23. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that expanding the language capability of the United Nations News Centre into Russian was a challenge, owing to inadequate resources. However, the information centres,

including those in Mexico City, Cairo, and Moscow, had been able to help translate some material. He hoped that such cooperation could continue, with key United Nations messages being translated into as many languages as possible. The Department currently had 63 information centres around the world with the capacity to work in 48 languages. They had produced material in more than 140 languages and maintained websites in more than 30 languages and it was hoped that more resources would be made available in the future support of the Department's pursuit of multilingualism.

24. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to continue with its general debate on the item.

25. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, congratulated the Department on its promotion and achievement of better understanding of United Nations work and goals as well as its promotion of ad hoc thematic debates in the General Assembly, and called on the Organization to maintain the objectivity, impartiality, precision and coherence of its messages. He also urged the Department to continue to update its communications network in order to encourage the coherence and effectiveness of the system's protocol for coordination of and response to health emergencies in order to encourage multilateral, as opposed to unilateral, action.

26. Since the changing international situation called for innovative ways of ensuring a better flow and greater precision of information, the Group welcomed the new structure set up by the United Nations Communications Group to enhance the coordination and effectiveness of the Organization's agents in crisis situations. The Rio Group admired the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication but, while considering websites to be a useful tool, it was concerned at the digital divide between developed and developing countries. He therefore welcomed the report's emphasis on the fact that new media did not replace traditional means of communication, the main source of information in developing countries, which should continue to be used to convey the United Nations message.

27. The Group also applauded the information and promotion deployed by the Department and the United Nations information centres, and reaffirmed its full respect for freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, the media should operate responsibly and with full respect for relevant national laws and United Nations instruments. In that regard, the Group was concerned at the violation of radio-electronic frequencies and reiterated the need for them to be used in the public interest and in accordance with international law.

28. One of the Group's priorities was parity among the Organization's six official languages. Applauding the initiative for the *UN Chronicle* to achieve greater methodological rigour, he urged the Department to redouble its quest for options for its publications in all six official languages.

29. The Group also endorsed the Department's endeavours in support of Middle East peace through dialogue among journalists, intellectuals and civil society, as well as its efforts to increase its collaboration with NGOs. Reiterating the Group's support for the Department's work, he invited it to continue to improve its information machinery in order to bring the voice of the Organization to the world and gain the international community's better understanding of and support for its activities.

30. **Mr. Mohamad** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Department's policies had been built on the foundations of close cooperation and partnership with the Committee on Information, which must continue as the Department played its vital role as the public voice of the United Nations.

31. The most daunting task before the Department was to reach out to the widest possible audiences because many countries, especially developing countries, lacked adequate resources and technical means to access information on the activities and achievements of the United Nations. Since comprehensive, accurate, impartial and balanced coverage of its deliberations, decisions and actions could promote better understanding and goodwill, it was critical for the Department continuously and actively to project the Organization's ideals and accomplishments, intensify outreach and transmit its message to all peoples of the world. The Group supported the promotion by the Department of the Organization's work and issues of importance to the international community, and appreciated its many new initiatives and the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine.

32. All possible measures should be taken to strengthen the United Nations information centres, a vital information bridge across the gap between the

developed and developing countries in terms of access to information and communication technologies. Any decision pertaining to the Centres' reorganization must be taken in close consultation with the host countries, and must take the geography, languages and technological standard of the different regions into account.

33. Given the need for the United Nations website to be available in all official languages, more resources and effort should be allocated to achieving full linguistic parity and to bridging the language disparities among the websites. He commended the Department's efforts to improve the structure of the top layers of the website, which would improve the accessibility, usability and user-friendliness of the site content. However, the Group attached great importance to the continued use of traditional media, including radio and print press, in disseminating the main messages of the United Nations, for traditional media remained the primary means of communication in developing countries. There was a need for closer cooperation between the Department and other substantive departments, in particular, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, and the Department should also play an active role in raising public awareness of the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals.

34. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that effective information flow not only helped to garner the international community's support for the Organization's activities, but also promoted transparency and accountability within the United Nations system. The Department must continue to ensure and further enhance the accessibility, speed and quality of that information flow; it was equally important that the information should be accurate, reliable, impartial and non-politicized.

35. Noting with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262), ASEAN commended the Department's dissemination of information to the global audience and its sterling work in providing clear communication and accurate information during the outbreak of influenza A (H1N1), as well as the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. The Department's provision of adequate, credible and timely information on both issues had facilitated the establishment of a common agenda for dealing with those critical issues.

36. ASEAN welcomed the Department's new initiatives to reach out to wider audiences, especially its use of new media in order to engage with younger people, enabling them to express their views and help to address common challenges and concerns through greater participation. However, global technological development notwithstanding, many countries lacked advanced means of communication, with traditional media, such as radio and newspapers, remaining central to communications; United Nations work in those areas should be maintained, while information and publications should be disseminated in local languages as well in order to make it more accessible to all. The Department should also help developing countries to build up their communications technology in order to give all countries access to United Nations services as well as the global information pool.

37. He welcomed the Department's close cooperation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support in efforts to promote United Nations peacekeeping operations; similar efforts should be made to promote peacebuilding activities undertaken by the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in order to bridge the critical resource gap in post-conflict situations. The Department was also encouraged to promote a holistic approach to United Nations peacekeeping operations and garner support for sufficient and flexible funding for peacebuilding activities.

38. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Blueprint, adopted at the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand, called on ASEAN Member States to lay the groundwork for free flows of information, support fellowship and exchange programmes and enhance the national media's capacity to promote regional community-building, while the 15th Summit, with its theme "Enhancing connectivity, empowering peoples", aimed to strengthen the region's communication infrastructure through education and capacity-building in order to bridge the digital divide and pave the way for regional partnership with the Department of Public Information.

39. Speaking in his national capacity, he expressed Thailand's support for the Department's work to enhance information accessibility to the general public, regardless of gender, race, nationality or physical condition and to ensure the utmost availability of

public access to information, and promotion of public awareness of the global agenda.

40. **Mr. Ericson** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that managing the flow of information was a core activity of any major organization and an increasingly important task in the current globalized media landscape. Climate change and the influenza A (H1N1) virus stood out in 2009 as topics on which the United Nations message had needed to reach a wide audience. The Department had proven its competence in both those areas, not least in the case of the H1N1 influenza virus, on which topic United Nations information had been both timely and widespread. Credit must also go to the Task Force of the United Nations Communications Group, which had helped to maintain message coherence in communications during the influenza outbreak.

41. The European Union stood by the three priorities that it had previously outlined. First, further streamlining of the resolution by the Task Force would give the Department a clearer starting point for its work and strengthen the resolution's message. Second, efforts to maximize the output of the Department's limited resources should be continued, especially with regard to creating synergies among the various United Nations information centres worldwide. In Europe, the Organization now operated on the basis of one regional focal point for public information; where appropriate, that model should be replicated in other parts of the world as a way of creating synergies and saving costs.

42. Third, the Union assigned priority to multilingualism, and it was encouraging that the Department had continued to emphasize the parity of the official languages. Well aware of resource limitations, the Union reiterated the importance of multilingualism as a tool in its client-oriented outreach approach, in which information centres played a key role. The transformation of the *UN Chronicle* into a genuinely thought-provoking *UN Affairs* journal as an authoritative voice on issues on the Organization's agenda and on its values and objectives would enable further outreach. The Union also welcomed the revamping of the top layers of the United Nations website in all six official languages.

43. Press access was a key factor. Given the logistical challenges involved in covering ministerial week at the General Assembly, the Department should consider allowing more than one press conference to take place at the same time. He also noted that 31 journalists had already been killed in 2009 as a consequence of their profession, and that the number could reach the 2008 record of 42 by the end of the year. It was a collective duty to halt such killings and ensure that those responsible were brought to account.

44. **Mr. Al-Shafi** (Qatar), said that his delegation supported the agreement to form a task force to streamline the resolution on questions relating to information and produce a revised text at least two weeks before the opening of the thirty-second session of the Committee on Information.

45. It was important to achieve linguistic parity in the work of the Department of Public Information. While his delegation welcomed the launch of the redesigned United Nations home page, it was concerned that not enough resources had been allocated to close the ever widening gap among websites in the Organization's six official languages. Further measures were required to ensure adequate support of languages that used non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic, and improve the quality of Arabic-language websites. The use of English and French as the working languages of the United Nations system was a repudiation of the principle of multilingualism; the Secretariat should do more to achieve parity among the official languages.

46. The question of Palestine was one of the most important issues on the international agenda, and the Department should continue enhancing its special information programme on Palestine. That programme played a crucial role in raising awareness of Israel's violations of United Nations resolutions and the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation trusted that the Secretary-General's reports would henceforth always include a section on the Department's activities in relation to the question of Palestine. The Department should also continue its efforts to foster international dialogue among civilizations and a culture of peace.

47. His Government attached great importance to freedom of the press and the right of journalists to perform their jobs without fear of being persecuted,

harmed or killed. However, with freedom of expression came a responsibility to serve the public good and an obligation to refrain from publishing harmful speech.

48. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen), said that his delegation attached great importance to the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine, in particular the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East and the training programme for young Palestinian journalists.

49. With regard to the United Nations website, he noted with concern that the number of English-language pages had increased in relation to the number of pages in the other official languages.

50. He urged the Department to appoint without delay a new director for the United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a, in view of the important role that centre played in disseminating information about the Organization to the people of Yemen, which was one of the least developed countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

51. *Mr. Valladares (Honduras), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

52. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation attached great importance to the development of a new worldwide information system that was equitable and reflected the principles of the United Nations and international law. In a world beset by conflicts and increasingly complex transnational challenges, the Department of Public Information played an important role in galvanizing international public opinion and spreading the Organization's message of peace. It was also instrumental in focusing attention on such issues as the global financial crisis, climate change, the influenza A (H1N1) epidemic, terrorism and natural disasters.

53. Having reviewed the Secretary-General's report (A/64/262), his delegation stressed that information centres in developing countries should be expanded in view of the role they played in capacity-building and in training journalists.

54. While welcoming the Department's efforts to improve the United Nations website, his delegation stressed that greater effort was required to achieve, without delay, parity among the official languages of the Organization. In particular, resources should be allocated for improving the Arabic pages of the website.

55. The work of the Department on the question of Palestine was particularly worthy of commendation, but he urged the Department to pay even more attention to that question in view of the continuing suffering of the Palestinian people under the yoke of Israeli occupation.

56. He further urged the Department to redouble its efforts to close the North-South digital divide and to ensure adequate funding for its programmes in that regard. It should also provide more extensive coverage of events in Africa and focus its attention on programmes and initiatives aimed at helping the African peoples achieve their aspirations.

57. **Ms. Bey** Mui Leng (Singapore) said that Internet-based media represented an evolution of the way information was disseminated to the masses. The current widespread accessibility of computers and the Internet had empowered millions through easy, rapid dissemination of information.

58. In creating new modalities and widening its reach and impact, new media had the potential to transform the way people communicated, lived and worked. However, new media was not fair media, given the persistent digital divide between those with easy access to its tools and those who could not even afford print media, let alone computers or iPhones. Clearly, much remained to be done to bridge that divide and channel the benefits of widely available information to all. Through the Department, the United Nations could spread the positive aspects of the new media, especially by paying close attention to the developing countries' specific needs.

59. Her Government had attempted to develop a government-to-people relationship via the new media with the creation of a programme, to provide new-media platforms enabling citizens to share their views on national issues and to play a more active role in policymaking. New media, albeit in its early stages, was a useful tool for enhancing citizens' sense of identity and belonging. The experiences of countries that had assimilated new media into their outreach programmes could provide useful lessons on adapting new information technologies to local conditions.

60. **Ms. Vargas Walter** (Cuba) said that in an environment in which the media were rapidly transformed and the information flow was skewed, the goal of promoting objective, balanced and impartial news to as wide an audience as possible posed myriad

challenges. The accelerated development of ICT and related technologies had not resulted in equal benefits for all. Indeed, the gap in the access to new information technologies had increased and the digital divide between North and South had widened. The decision as to what news was circulated and what suppressed was taken by those with power, by the mainstream media outlets which all too frequently lied, manipulated history and violated the freedom of expression and information. The United Nations must seek ways to change that reality and take practical measures that would afford rational use and more social appropriation of information technologies.

61. Cuba believed that the 63 United Nations information centres throughout the world, particularly in the developed countries, must continue to play a vital role in spreading balanced information, taking the needs of the target audience into account. Broadcast media, such as radio, should be promoted as a means of informing the vast illiterate population groups in the countries of the South. Cuba therefore welcomed the Department's continued improvement of its radio programmes.

62. Once again, her delegation wished to denounce the radio and television aggression that the United States Government continued to aim at her country. Those broadcasts contravened international law as well as the rules and procedures of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Each week, United States-based stations broadcast to Cuba more than 1,908 hours of radio and television through 30 different frequencies, at an annual cost of over $30 million of federal funds. In an escalation of that aggression, the United States Government had begun using military aircraft to beam signals into Cuba. Of the 23 stations broadcasting subversive programmes against Cuba, 18 aimed their signals directly towards the country. Three of them were the property of the United States Government while some of the stations could be linked to terrorists who lived in United States territory.

63. In condemning those acts of aggression, her delegation reiterated that the choice of the kind of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was a sovereign decision and not one for persons who, from the United States, forged their plans against the Cuban Revolution in flagrant violation of current international rules on radio spectrum regulations. Cuba had not requested those broadcasts and did not need them.

64. **Mr. Win** (Myanmar) said that the Department had a crucial role to play in apprising States of United Nations reform by providing timely, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and coherent information about the Organization and its activities. His country fully supported the Secretary-General's initiatives regarding information on the MDGs, climate change, the impact of the economic and financial crisis on development, pandemic disease, sustainable development, poverty reduction, conflict prevention, HIV/AIDS and combating terrorism. However, priority should be assigned to the comprehensive integration of all United Nations activities. The Organization's objectives could only be achieved if people were aware of vital issues, and their active participation would pave the way for the successful attainment of its goals.

65. He welcomed the Department's commitment to ensuring that people in both developed and developing countries were informed of its activities through traditional and new communication technologies alike. And yet, dissemination imbalances and distorted reporting of events persisted in the developing countries. Increased cooperation was needed to promote a new world information and communication order and to reduce the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Department could also be instrumental in bridging the development gap.

66. The United Nations information centres remained central to the Department's efforts to bring the United Nations story to people around the world, and he welcomed endeavours to strengthen those centres' communications capacity at the national and regional levels in order to promote system-wide coherence in their work with the rest of the United Nations system. The expanded use of the media and new information and communication technologies could also contribute immensely to the Department's work.

67. The establishment of a two-tier governance mechanism for the United Nations website attested to the usefulness of ICT and it was to be hoped that the Internet Steering Committee would soon produce results. He was confident that the Internet strategy for the Secretariat would enable all Member States and the general public to receive accurate and balanced information.

68. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that the Department, through its creative use of new media, ensured that the Organization's objectives, activities and achievements

were communicated to all peoples across the globe and that it remained a relevant and respected voice on important issues on the global agenda.

69. The Department continued to perform that critical task even in the face of significant budget cuts and an ever-expanding agenda. Over the first half of 2009 alone, it had undertaken media campaigns on a wide variety of issues. He also commended the Department's youth outreach activities, through the Global Model United Nations and the Annual International Student Conference scheduled for December in New York; he looked forward to engaging with the Department on how to ensure that young people who were unable to participate in person, could benefit from those events.

70. While welcoming the availability of information through new media, he stressed once again that traditional means of communication remained the primary source of information for peoples of the developing world. The Department's positive work could play an important role in underlining, for example, the negative impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, particularly on small developing countries, including those in the Caribbean. Developing countries needed the assistance and support of the Department to galvanize international support for efforts to stem that illicit trade.

71. There was currently only a single United Nations Information Centre located in Trinidad and Tobago to serve the 14 Member States in the English-speaking Caribbean as well as the territories of the Netherland Antilles. At the very least, given the region's wide geographical spread, an additional information officer should be stationed at the UNDP Office in Jamaica to service information needs of the Caribbean.

72. In collaboration with the Member States in the Caribbean Community, the African Union and other countries, Jamaica looked forward to working with the Permanent Memorial Committee and the Department for the erection of a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and to ensure that the annual commemorative activities in that regard were a fitting and solemn tribute that would enhance global awareness and ensure that such a tragedy was never forgotten and was never repeated.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.